

Economic Development Advisory Committee

4.15.09 Meeting minutes

Americana Room – Hampshire Hills

Present:

Tracy Bardsley, Do-it

Brad Chappell, Chappell Tractor

Matt Ciardelli, Ciardelli Fuel Co

Rick Holder, Hampshire Hills Sports Club

Tim O'Connell, Butternut Farms

Tom Sapienza, Hampshire Hills Sports Club

Sean Trombly, Trombly Gardens

Dale White, Leighton A White, Inc

Chris Costantino, Conservation Commission representative

Rosie Deloge, Milford School District representative

Janet Langdell, Planning Board representative

John McCormack, TIFD representative

Bill Parker, Director Community Development

Mike Putnam, Board of Selectmen representative

Shirley Wilson, Recording secretary

T. Sapienza called the meeting to order at 7:30AM.

C. Costantino made a motion to accept the minutes as written. J. McCormack seconded and all voted in favor with J. Langdell and M. Putnam abstaining.

Review and discussion of draft recommendations dated 4/13/09:

General comments:

J. Langdell suggested that the website, listed under Issue V; Action #2, could be a communication tool throughout the document for many of the recommendations. Maybe website improvement could be embedded throughout the recommendations as an action step such as "improve website to facilitate communication of information relating to policies and procedures or the permitting process." J. McCormack said that is a very important point; the website is more than just a marketing tool for the outside. It is a useful tool for the various committees and the departments and a way to ensure consistency. It is visible to everyone.

D. White asked Mike Putnam how the Selectmen will review these recommendations and if this format was direct enough. M. Putnam replied that just glancing at this draft, it was perfect. The board would get this document in their packets prior to the meeting and would be able to review it and formulate questions. The only change he would like to see would be to add the committee members' names so that the board could see their involvement. B. Parker said that would definitely be added to the very beginning of the document.

J. McCormack inquired how this would be introduced, implemented and made part of the ongoing management process; how to follow up and circle back for objectives and performance. M. Putnam said that one problem, as an elected official, is that things change every year on the board and things get lost in the cracks, therefore, he would like to see this committee maintained and then part of this committee's charge could be to follow up periodically. J. McCormack then asked the same question to Janet as to how the Planning Board would ensure that this is integrated with the various departments and becomes part of the process. J. Langdell replied that the Planning Board does not have a supervisory role with "other departments" but information would be exchanged and referenced what they are doing with the Facilities Committee, the CIP and the Select Board in that we have an annual summit to touch base and review the reports from the previous year and to ask questions: are we where we need to be, are there pieces that will work, are there pieces that are dated?

R. Deloge suggested that the prioritization of recommendations be stated a little bit clearer, possibly using the term "priority order" under item D. *Recommendations from the Committee.*

J. Langdell brought up concerns regarding action items versus recommendations. B. Parker said a lot of this is wording; he tried to come up with an action word from the recommendation to turn it into a specific step and yes, sometimes they could be one in the same. It was pointed out in emails that some recommendations might be actions and some actions could be recommendations. The document is open to revisions. J. Langdell wondered if we have a well thought out goal statement with an explanatory paragraph, do we need both recommendations and action items. S. Trombly said they could both be combined together. C. Costantino said the definition of recommendation was something to do, in other words an action. B. Parker said sometimes the action items are specific to one of the recommendations, not all. J. Langdell concurred and said the words can be moved around.

M. Putnam spoke to the formatting and said that a narrative from the committee should be first, then include the goal and finally list the committee's recommendations. The presentation should let the board know what the thought process was; list the observations, then the goal and finally how to get to there. After discussion on what to call the committee narrative, there was consensus to call it *Committee Findings*. M. Putnam then referenced "...economic development is of highest priority to ensure support...." under Issue I; Goals and said he asked who determined that. Maybe there are other issues that the Selectmen feel are a higher priority. It needs to get on the list as a suggestion, but it is ultimately up to the Selectmen to make that decision. M. Putnam also added that a one page summary would be easier for him to work from. The information would be clearly broken down out front and then he could work back to get the details. B. Parker explained that was why the actions were broken out, so that one can zero right in on the steps and what we are doing to accomplish them. A one page summary of actions certainly would make sense. D. White reiterated that it has to be simple.

D. White said that this group cannot lose the intent or the discussion of that original meeting because that was really the essence of this committee coming about. B. Parker said that will also show up in the beginning of the report; why we are here and what brought us here. B. Chappell said we do address some of those questions, but have we clearly communicated the frustration expressed about the permitting process? J. Langdell said before we put in a statement like that she would like to see if there is consensus around the table. The language should ensure a strong, yet fair balance between the needs of business, the needs of the citizens and the needs of conservation. B. Chappell said that our job is to express the concerns of that first meeting. T. O'Connell said we had many items on the agenda at that first meeting and per his recollection we only covered about two although he would have liked input on the other items. So to say the sole outcome of that meeting was reflected in our first priority may be true, but there were many things never discussed that have showed up in our other priorities now. The impact of that first meeting is certainly reflected in our report. M. Ciardelli added that the first meeting was comprised of only community business leaders.

B. Parker said the results of the first meeting that we have a lot of problems with our municipal policies and procedures, will be expressed in the introduction but as the group met it was evident that economic development was far more involved than just municipal policies and procedures. So communicating the importance of that issue and it being the number one priority will somehow need to be explained. J. Langdell said that introduction will also help later on when we say that there are areas of our regulations that need to be addressed. Some of the regulations are town driven, some state driven and we need to keep those on the forefront and address what we can or find ways of addressing those bigger ones such as fire suppression. The specifics may help the reader understand how we are driving towards this balance. M. Ciardelli said there is no way this committee can say lift all these restrictions because ultimately it will have to come from the Selectmen and Guy. We have to take baby steps with all the stakeholders.

T. Sapienza said that the town needs an attitude adjustment. There are three main groups; the Town, business and residents. Businesses would be thrilled to receive a helpful attitude from the Town. The Town would be thrilled if the businesses recognized that there are reasons for some of these rules and regulations. The residents would be thrilled if businesses would shoulder more of the tax burden without changing the character of the town. We need to somehow get the three groups working together towards a common goal; to promote economic development in a manor that will protect and preserve the character of the town but done in conjunction with state and federal laws.

M. Putnam said these recommendations will not be acted upon overnight. The Selectmen will have to review this report to see what can be done when and determine what the impact to taxpayers will be. This will be an ongoing

process establishing something for the next thirty years that's why he would like to see this committee continue and keep these recommendations in the forefront.

R. Deloge said that in reference to implementation, that is what we have Guy Scaife for. We were asked to produce a report of our findings to the Select Board. They will hand it over to Guy and there will be more discussion and possibly clarification between Guy and this committee. Our town administrator will take it from there. J. Langdell said that once our level is vetted and when Guy goes to implement these recommendations, there will not be a need to get everyone together, Guy will determine how the objectives cascade down and taken to heart by everyone in municipal government. J. McCormack agreed and said that there still has to be engagement past that because people may see opportunity for input. The engagement process is much more effective if some of the objectives are set and come from the people. This will be an ongoing document even after the presentation. B. Parker added that part of the purpose of this report is to get communication going between the department heads and the business community so that there is better understanding.

Issue I: Municipal Policies and Procedures

Recommendation #5 - J. Langdell asked who would establish the target groups or would this become a function of the EDAC committee down the road? B. Parker said that was more of an action. R. Deloge said maybe the recommendation should be *Establish a policy or procedure for this kind of work to happen* as opposed to establishing a committee. J. Langdell then suggested the recommendation be *to improve communication between businesses and community members to increase awareness and understanding of the permitting process, policies and procedures*; and then under that we might list: *improve the website, public education, etc.*

Recommendation #2 - M. Ciardelli said when reading the recommendations and action steps, the more tangible the item is, the more will get done. Unless we provide a tangible way to continually communicate this will just get skimmed over. Should we mesh the recommendations and actions and make five or six good recommendations to present? J. McCormack agreed that there may be too many same-level details for the Selectmen and said that at the most senior level of the management process there should only be a set of no more than five to seven objectives. Those objectives would then be cascaded down and depending on the specificity of those objectives; the departments would take on those objectives and have a subset of their own more pertinent to what they do. Our five or six goals would be the objectives for the Selectmen to pass down and each goal should be identifiable and quantifiable with a time target tied into it.

Goal - B. Chappell said he noticed throughout the report that business was reflected heavily and maybe the goal should read *establish a proactive business and residential support and business and residential development policy* B. Parker said the focus of economic development is more business oriented. T. Sapienza added that everything else is affected indirectly.

T. Bardsley suggested working in *maintaining a high quality of life along with maintaining current business and new business development*. B. Parker said that could be included in the explanation of the vision statement. M. Putnam said that there would be public involvement if zoning changes were needed. J. Langdell said that we are trying to set a theme or tone for not just the municipal side but for the entire town and it begins here. In the introductory part, we would recognize the balance of economic development and also communicate with and engage the community so that they understand the process beforehand, not just at the time of zoning changes. We should push to engage the community should be more up front so that the public understands why development is good for the community rather than have everybody react to what is being done. D. White said a continuing Economic Development Committee would help bridge that gap. J. Langdell agreed and also noted that we need to be careful not to duplicate the efforts of other groups such as Do-it. Both should blend or dovetail together.

J. Langdell said she could be comfortable supporting language like *legally, within the legal realm, etc.*, if we communicate somewhere up top the need to strike a balance as to what is fair and what is least restrictive. B. Parker said *fairness* and *equitable* are used throughout the report.

M. Putnam said being in the construction trades, he has asked around about our permitting process and got nothing but positive feedback from people who established new businesses in town. Our process was fairly simple and the employees were great to work with. He has heard nothing negative from people using the system in the last few months. We have to remember that a lot of the regulations in place are because of what people

have done in the past; buildings not up to code, clear cutting land, or fire hazards. There are just some things that we can't go out and do anymore. D. White clarified that he has gotten tremendous service from town hall staff but frustration enters during these economic times and the charge of this committee is to figure out what can we do to help ease the existing burden. The process is not broke and he can live with rules and regulations, but there does need to be an attitude adjustment for everybody. R. Holder said as these recommendations try to trickle down, wouldn't it be wise to have some reasonable hand holding from the economic development committee in getting the department heads together for the purpose of explaining the rationale behind the recommendations. If this comes down as an edict, there may be some misinterpretation and possibly resentment.

M. Putnam said that addressing the website is one of the Selectmen's goals for this year. T. Sapienza said that was a good example because this committee has identified website improvement as a key objective and we can review and quantify the progress of that issue. T. Bardsley said that we are assuming that this committee will become the ongoing Economic Development Committee and that has yet to be decided. We are making that recommendation to the Selectmen to establish an economic development committee. Reading this report, she sees items that the future committee may want to decide for themselves in terms of communication and establishing their own set of goals and objectives.

J. Langdell said that of the six recommendations, there were only three principal ones. We need to plan the policy, we need the BOS to grab it and get it into the municipal hands and then we need the ongoing piece to assist in community outreach, marketing, community education and oversight. All the other items can be listed as action steps.

- #1 *Incorporate as strong, community-supported economic development vision with achievable common goals and actions, supported by the boards, commissions, and other stakeholders, into the Milford Master Plan.*
We need something in writing.
Add *communication and the website* to #1 as an action step.
- #2 *Adopt a top-down approach from the Board of Selectmen and Planning Board that supports the economic development vision.* That gets to the Selectmen, the buy-in process, management by objectives, and the whole interdepartment piece.
- #3 *Establish a formal economic development advisory council....* combining #4 and #5 as listed.

B. Parker inquired if the permitting process listed as #5 should be an action item under the formal economic development council. J. Langdell said *methods to engage the public in becoming knowledgeable* falls under that overriding communications piece and action steps 1-4 will fall in nicely under the three main recommendations.

R. Deloge inquired about the term top-down approach. Top-down sort of flies in one's face and wondered if we could relay the same recommendation by using *adopt an all-inclusive approach*. B. Parker said that one of his observations over the years has been that there has not been a strong emphasis on the top-down approach coming from the Selectmen, meaning they react more as opposed to taking the initiative to act first. The basis of our work is to get the Selectmen to buy in from the top and communicate that downward. Many ideas were suggested and after discussion the committee decided to keep *top-down approach from the Board of Selectmen and Planning Board* and remove *to the departments*.

Issue II: Municipal Infrastructure and Services

B. Parker explained that the intent of *It is important to recognize that the cost must be shared by all stakeholders while avoiding undue burden on either the individual taxpayer or the business/development community to ensure sustainable economic growth* was to incorporate some of the discussion brought up by Walter Murray that it is great to expand services and infrastructure but not totally at the cost of the taxpayer and not totally at the cost of the developer. M. Putnam said the object was not to put undue cost to develop the infrastructure on the water and sewer users when the town gets most of the revenue in tax money. Installation of new infrastructure should be bonded by the town or paid for through the town with impact fees or whatever vehicles are in place for the town to collect money from the businesses to offset that cost. Once everything is in place, then the town would give it over to the Water and Sewer Commission to maintain the system to be supported by user fees. B. Parker said the TIF District would do that for Brox and also the state allows improvement districts to be set up that people would pay into.

M. Putnam gave a brief explanation of Pennichuck water and the usage of town owned lines saying we pay for water supplied by Pennichuck and they pay us for using the distribution system in certain areas of town. There was also discussion on ownership of the service lines. D. White then inquired as to who owned the infrastructure and said that we have a very adequate Water and Sewer department. From here on, wouldn't we want to own all future infrastructure like the one that will go down Emerson Rd? M. Putnam said he will be meeting with Larry Anderson and would look into this further. J. McCormack added that there was confusion and uncertainty as to who had responsibility for what at the Reserve, so it would be good to work this out. J. Langdell said Dale brought up a good question because as a matter of policy from a planning perspective what criteria does the town have for infrastructure ownership or other alternatives. D. White then said that there is greater cost to the end user to build or extend infrastructure when given to an outside party because of all the inspections and engineering that goes with it; where the town can build it to the same guidelines, but they already have people on board to do the construction and inspections. That lessens the burden on the end user and makes economic development more appealing. M. Putnam referenced state RSA's.

T. O'Connell asked what shape are the water and sewer utilities in? The treatment facility was built twenty-five years ago and EPA regulations have gotten more stringent. What is our water capacity? Do we have the facilities for ten to fifteen years from now? B. Parker replied that the sewer plant is at 65% capacity and we have adequate water for now, but they are looking at additional sources for the future. That leads to the importance of making sure growth and development is tied in with the capacity of the infrastructure. We are ok for the foreseeable future, but we do need to plan ahead.

D. White inquired about impact fees. He noted that this was one of the early on discussions; what can the town do, as a whole, in these economic times to encourage new development. B. Parker referenced action item #6 and said that impact fees work if there is a lot of growth going on because we collect a minimal amount of impact fees overall especially from residential, so it is an issue that needs to be looked at. D. White then referenced a situation on Powers St with Police impact fees. M. Putnam clarified that impact fees are tied into capital reserves and are dictated by state rules and regulations. Discussion followed.

Action item #4 - T. Bardsley asked if any commercial and industrial incentive programs could be added.

Action #8 - T. O'Connell noted that the concerns regarding high speed communications and internet access in certain parts of town was mentioned, but asked if it should be emphasized. M. Putnam said that would be more business to business and although he understands the point, it is not at a level of government involvement. R. Holder said that it is good to keep this in the mix, because if the state didn't get involved with the FairPoint issues we would be a lot worse off. There may need to be some sort of town involvement in the future. J. Langdell said it is better to be proactive than reactive as we look at future development. More discussion followed.

B. Parker said he would re-format the report for the next meeting.

R. Deloge said she will meet with the superintendant to come up with suggestions for Issue VI.

The next meeting date was set for Wednesday April 22nd in the Americana Room at 7:30AM.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05.